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SUPPORT MOAKLEY-DECONCINI BILL TO PROTECT CENTRAL AMERICAN REFUGEES

Dear Colleague:

I am writing to urge your cosponsorship of H.R. 45, a bill to offer temporary protection to nationals who have fled civil war and civil strife in El Salvador and Nicaragua. Specifically, the bill would suspend the deportation and detention of Salvadoran and Nicaraguan nationals for three years, pending a General Accounting Office Study on country conditions and other options for relief. Nationals who receive this protection must register with the U.S. government and will be provided written work authorization. The bill also includes a cut-off date disqualifying future entrants from receiving this relief.

The current situation in El Salvador remains troubling. Government forces and death squads continue to be responsible for numerous deaths of civilians and guerrilla activity has increased. According to Tutela Legal, the human rights office of the Roman Catholic Church in El Salvador, government forces were responsible for 39 killings of civilians between January and July 13, 1989; death squads were to blame for 17; and guerrilla forces for 56. Reports of torture by security forces and military harassment of communities which have been repopulated in recent years by the displaced and repatriated refugees have become all too common.

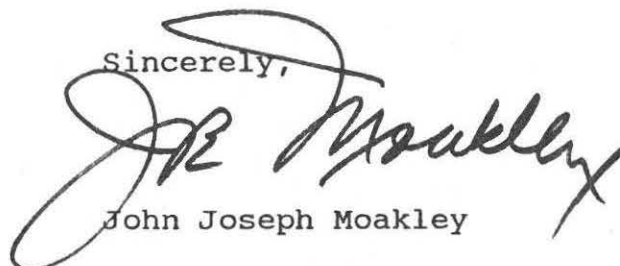
In Nicaragua, according to Americas Watch, there is evidence of a pattern of violent abuses by government forces in remote areas of Nicaragua's Region 6 (Matagalpa and Jinotega) between 1987-89. These abuses include political killings and disappearances by army and state security police. The targets are primarily suspected contra collaborators. Contra forces also continue to commit violent abuses against civilians. Since April 13, according to Witness for Peace, 21 civilians have been killed, 15 wounded, and 58 have been kidnapped in contra attacks. The overall human rights situation in Nicaragua will remain uncertain until after the February elections and until there is a resolution to the war.

In the past, the United States has provided temporary protection to nationals who have departed their homelands as a result of war, human rights abuses and civil strife. There is nothing unusual about the relief contained in H.R. 45 -- what's unusual is the fact that the U.S. government has failed to do anything to assure the security and well-being of Salvadoran and Nicaraguan nationals.

H.R. 45 is not a referendum on U.S. policy in the region. The bill enjoys support by both critics and supporters of our current policy. This legislation is a much needed humanitarian measure that could save many lives.

If you would like to cosponsor the bill, please contact Jim McGovern at 225-8273.

Sincerely,



John Joseph Moakley